



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

September 3, 2019

Members of the Maryland Board of Public Works
Louis L. Goldstein Treasury Building
80 Calvert Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan, Treasurer Kopp, and Comptroller Franchot:

We, the undersigned Maryland lawmakers, respectfully request that the Board of Public Works promptly resolve the pending petitions for compensation filed by individuals wrongly incarcerated in Maryland.

Five petitioners—Jerome Johnson, Lamar Johnson, Walter Lomax, Clarence Shipley, and Hubert James Williams—spent a combined 120 years in Maryland prisons for crimes they did not commit. Maryland judges and prosecutors have deemed these men as actually innocent, and in accordance with State law, each petitioned the Board of Public Works for compensation. As recently reported by multiple media outlets, however, the Board has not acted on the petitions. The majority of the five petitions have been pending without response for over a year.

Maryland State Finance and Procurement Code § 10-501 empowers the Board of Public Works to compensate individuals who were wrongfully convicted and incarcerated in Maryland. Compensation is available only to individuals who obtained a full gubernatorial pardon, or who have obtained a writ of actual innocence and a State's Attorney certification regarding the same. Therefore, under the current statute, the Board has full authority to act on the pending petitions and award compensation to the five eligible Maryland exonerees. The Board has previously exercised this responsibility: from 1984 to 2004, it awarded compensation to exonerees in an average of six months from their date of eligibility. The Board should again use its authority under Maryland law to now compensate the five innocent men.

We write to underscore the urgency of resolving these petitions and providing compensation. Jerome Johnson, Lamar Johnson, Mr. Lomax, Mr. Shipley, and Mr. Williams collectively spent over a century as incarcerated men. Each exoneree suffered while incarcerated and faces serious obstacles in returning to society. Mr. Williams, the first to file his petition (in January 2018) after his innocence was confirmed by the Baltimore County Circuit Court and State's Attorney, has been homeless for large stretches of time since his release.

We urge the Board of Public Works to resolve the petitions for these five innocent men without further delay. The exonerees have followed Maryland law in seeking reasonable compensation. The Board's prompt resolution of the pending petitions is critical for the State to recognize the harm inflicted upon each wrongfully convicted Marylander and to help the innocent men rebuild their lives.

Thank you for your consideration,

Speaker Adrienne Jones, District 10

Delegate Heather Bagnall, District 33

Delegate Erek Barron, District 24

Delegate Sandy Bartlett, District 32

Delegate Regina T. Boyce, District 43

Delegate Ben Brooks, District 10

Delegate Jon Cardin, District 11

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Delegate Frank Conaway, District 40

Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield, District 19

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Delegate Kathleen Dumais, District 15

Delegate Jessica Feldmark, District 12

Delegate Diana Fennell, District 47A

Delegate Fraser-Hildalgo, District 15

Delegate Shaneka Henson, District 30A

Delegate Terri Hill, District 12

Delegate Kevin Hornberger, District 35A

Delegate Steve Johnson, District 34A

Delegate Anne Kaiser, District 14

Delegate Ariana Kelly, District 16

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Delegate Marc Korman, District 16

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Delegate Shelly Hettleman, District 11

Delegate Robbyn Lewis, District 46

Delegate Sara Love, District 16

Delegate Eric Luedtke, District 14

Delegate Maggie McIntosh, District 43

Delegate David Moon, District 20

Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr, District 17

Delegate Edith Patterson, District 28

Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk, District 21

Delegate Susie Proctor, District 27A

Delegate Lily Qi, District 15

Delegate Pam Queen, District 14

Delegate Mike Rogers, District 32

Delegate Sandy Rosenberg, District 41

Delegate Emily Shetty, District 18

Delegate Jared Solomon, District 18

Delegate Dana Stein, District 11

Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes, District 37A

Delegate Vaughn Stewart, District 19

Delegate Jen Terrasa, District 13

Delegate Veronica Turner, District 26

Delegate Alonzo Washington, District 22

Delegate William Wivell, District 2A

Delegate Karen Young, District 3A